

Message Text

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TO USDEL SECRETARY IMMEDIATE

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NO. 17 FOR CARTER FROM VANCE

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SOPN, OVIP (VANCE)

SUBJECT: PRESS MATERIAL

1. HERewith FULL TEXT WALL STREET JOURNAL EDITORIAL
FRIDAY APRIL 1 HEADED "AFTER THE NYET IS OVER."

2. IT WAS ENTIRELY PREDICTABLE THAT THE SOVIET UNION
WOULD REJECT PRESIDENT CARTER'S FIRST PROPOSALS FOR A
STRATEGIC ARMS AGREEMENT. THE REAL QUESTION IS WHAT
MR. CARTER WILL DO NOW THAT THE NYET IS OVER. WILL HIS
ADMINISTRATION FEEL IMPELLED TO MEET THE SOVIET STONE-
WALL BY COMING FORWARD WITH NEW PROPOSALS MORE PLEASING
TO THE KREMLIN? WITH MR. BREZHNEV REFUSING TO NEGOTIATE,
WILL THE ADMINISTRATION START TO NEGOTIATE WITH
ITSELF?

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3. THIS HAS BEEN PRECISELY THE AMERICAN REACTION
THROUGHOUT THE STRATEGIC ARMS NEGOTIATIONS, AND WE ARE
DELIGHTED TO SEE TENTATIVE INDICATIONS THAT THE MISTAKE
MAY NOT BE REPEATED THIS TIME AROUND. THE ALTERNATIVE
TO COMING FORWARD WITH WEAKER AND WEAKER POSITIONS IS TO
START MAKING THE CASE FOR THE POSITIONS THE SOVIETS HAVE
REJECTED, BOTH TO THEM AND TO THE AMERICAN PUBLIC. THAT

IS THE COURSE THAT PRESIDENT CARTER AND SECRETARY VANCE
SEEMED TO EMBARK ON IN THE IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH OF THE
SOVIET REJECTION WEDNESDAY.

4. THIS SEEMS TO US THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ESPECIALLY
DETAILED PUBLIC EXPLANATION OF THE AMERICAN PROPOSALS,
THE UNUSUAL PERSONAL APPEARANCE OF THE PRESIDENT HIM-
SELF, AND THE CANDOR WITH WHICH THE DISAPPOINTING RESULTS
WERE ACKNOWLEDGED. WE WERE PARTICULARLY IMPRESSED BY
MR. CARTER'S REMARK ABOUT THE DANGER OF PIECEMEAL PRO-
POSALS, CITING THE HISTORY OF THE RUSSIANS EXTRACTING
FROM U.S. PACKAGES THE AMERICAN CONCESSIONS WHILE
REJECTING THE OFFSETTING SOVIET ONES. WE COULD SCARCELY
ASK FOR BETTER EVIDENCE THAT THE CURRENT ADMINISTRATION
HAS DIGESTED THE LESSONS OF ITS PREDECESSORS' MISTAKES.
AND PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESMAN JODY POWELL SAID YESTERDAY
THERE WERE NO PLANS TO REVISE THE PROPOSALS.

5. MR. CARTER AND MR. VANCE HAVE STARTED TO MAKE AN
EXCELLENT CASE THAT THEIR PROPOSALS OUGHT TO BE ATTRAC-
TIVE TO THE SOVIETS IF THEY ARE TRULY INTERESTED IN ARMS
CONTROL. FOR OUR PART, WE HAVE SOME PROBLEMS WITH PARTS
OF THE TWO OPTIONS THAT THEY OFFERED THE SOVIETS BUT SEE
NOTHING IN THEM THAT SHOULD OUTRAGE EITHER THE SOVIETS
OR THE PENTAGON.

6. THE PREFERRED U.S. OPTION WAS A REDUCTION IN THE
NUMBERS OF MISSILES ALLOWED ON EACH SIDE, INCLUDING
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REDUCTIONS IN THE MULTIPLE-WARHEAD MISSILES IN WHICH THE
U.S. LEADS AND THE HEAVY MISSILES IN WHICH THE SOVIETS
LEAD. THE SOVIET BACKFIRE BOMBER WOULD HAVE BEEN
LOOSELY CONSTRAINED, WHILE THE U.S. CRUISE MISSILE WOULD
HAVE BEEN LIMITED TO LESS THAN INTERCONTINENTAL RANGE,
THUS PRESERVING THE ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT TACTICAL USES.

7. THE SECOND OPTION WAS SIMPLY TO DEFER BOTH THE
BACKFIRE AND THE CRUISE MISSILE ISSUES AND SIGN THE
CEILINGS AGREED TO AT THE VLADIVOSTOK SUMMIT. THE
SOVIETS REJECTED BOTH, CONTINUING TO INSIST THAT THE
CRUISE MISSILE, NEVER MENTIONED AT VLADIVOSTOK, BE
INCLUDED IN THE LIMITS AGREED TO THERE, WHILE THE BACK-
FIRE, WHICH EVEN WITHOUT REFUELING CAN FLY FROM THE
SOVIET UNION OVER THE U.S. AND LAND IN CUBA, NOT BE
COUNTED AS A STRATEGIC WEAPON.

8. NATURALLY THERE ARE SUGGESTIONS THAT THE SOVIET
REJECTION IS A REACTION TO PRESIDENT CARTER'S HUMAN

RIGHTS CAMPAIGN. BUT IT SEEMS TO US FAR MORE PLAUSIBLE
THAT THEY REJECTED THE OFFERS BECAUSE REJECTING U.S.

OFFERS HAS BEEN SO PROFITABLE A TACTIC FOR THEM IN THE
PAST, PERHAPS BECAUSE THEY HAD BEEN LED BY SOME PAST
AMERICAN NEGOTIATIONS TO EXPECT THEY COULD GET MORE, AND
MOSTLY BECAUSE MR. CARTER'S BALANCED PACKAGES DO NOT
GIVE THEM THE MILITARY ADVANTAGES THEY HOPE TO WIN IN
THE STRATEGIC ARMS NEGOTIATIONS.

9. DESPITE THE EXCELLENT START ON WEDNESDAY, AS THE
WEEKS AND MONTHS GO BY THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION WILL
HAVE TO FIGHT CONTINUOUSLY TO AVOID THE TEMPTATION TO
NEGOTIATE WITH ITSELF. THIS IS A NATURAL HABIT OF U.S.
BUREAUCRACIES, AND BEYOND THAT THE PRESIDENT HIMSELF HAS
PUT SUCH HEAVY RHETORICAL EMPHASIS ON ARMS CONTROL IT
MAY BE DIFFICULT FOR HIM TO FACE THE PROSPECT OF NOT
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ACTUALLY REACHING AN AGREEMENT. ESPECIALLY SO SINCE THE
FIVE-YEAR "INTERIM AGREEMENT" ON OFFENSIVE ARMS EXPIRES
THIS YEAR.

10. THE ADMINISTRATION OUGHT TO START NOW TO ASK ITSELF
WHAT ARMS PROGRAMS THE INTERIM AGREEMENT HAS STOPPED IN
THE LAST FIVE YEARS, DURING WHICH THE SOVIETS HAVE CON-
DUCTED A REMARKABLE STRATEGIC BUILDUP. PRECISELY WHAT,
IF ANYTHING, WILL CHANGE IF THE AGREEMENT ACTUALLY DOES
EXPIRE? EVEN MORE FUNDAMENTALLY, THE ADMINISTRATION
OUGHT TO ASK ITSELF IN WHAT SENSE THERE IS ANY "ARMS
RACE" IN THE FIRST PLACE. THE FIGURES ALBERT WOHLSTET-
TER GOT DECLASSIFIED IN 1974 SHOW BEYOND DOUBT THAT THE
TOTAL DESTRUCTIVE POWER OF THE U.S. ARSENAL, FAR FROM
SPIRALING UPWARD, HAS BEEN STEADILY SHRINKING AS TECH-
NOLOGY OPENS BETTER WAYS TO FULFILL MILITARY MISSIONS
THAN BRUTE WARHEAD SIZE.

11. UNLESS THE ADMINISTRATION STARTS TO ASK ITSELF SUCH
QUESTIONS, AND TO ADJUST ITS RHETORIC ACCORDINGLY, IT IS
LIKELY TO SLIP BACK INTO THE OLD HABITS OF ITS PREDECES-
SORS. BUT AT LEAST IT IS OFF ON THE RIGHT FOOT. EVEN
THOUGH CHAIRMAN BREZHNEV SNEEZED, PRESIDENT CARTER
PROMISES TO HANG TOUGH. WE HOPE HE CAN STICK TO IT.
END TEXT.

CHRISTOPHER

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